CRP Community Feedback Results

The Community Reinvestment Program (CRP) received an initial $200 million investment for July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2025. CRP included 17 different programs, funded over 400 different organizations and provided services to over 30,000 people.

We learned a lot from the initial investments through ongoing conversations with community partners, community meetings, listening sessions, and a recent Commerce Community Survey. We appreciate everyone who has taken the time to share your feedback, concerns, challenges and insights. Your feedback has and will continue to shape our way forward.

Methods

The CRP team conducted **community listening sessions** and a **public survey** to gain community feedback to inform investment planning for 2025-2027.

Community listening sessions

Commerce hosted five virtual listening sessions with people across Washington throughout July and August 2025. Over 336 registered to attend, and the sessions were available on Zoom in the afternoon and evening. Commerce presented CRP's plan for the 2025-2027 biennium and asked for feedback from attendees, both about the future of the program and what could be improved moving forward.

In collaboration with Commerce, WA Office of Equity simultaneously hosted six sessions across Washington state. Four of those sessions were in-person in Yakima, Pierce, Snohomish, and King County. Two sessions were virtual. 119 people attended and provided both supportive and critical feedback about program implementation and how to move forward.

Survey

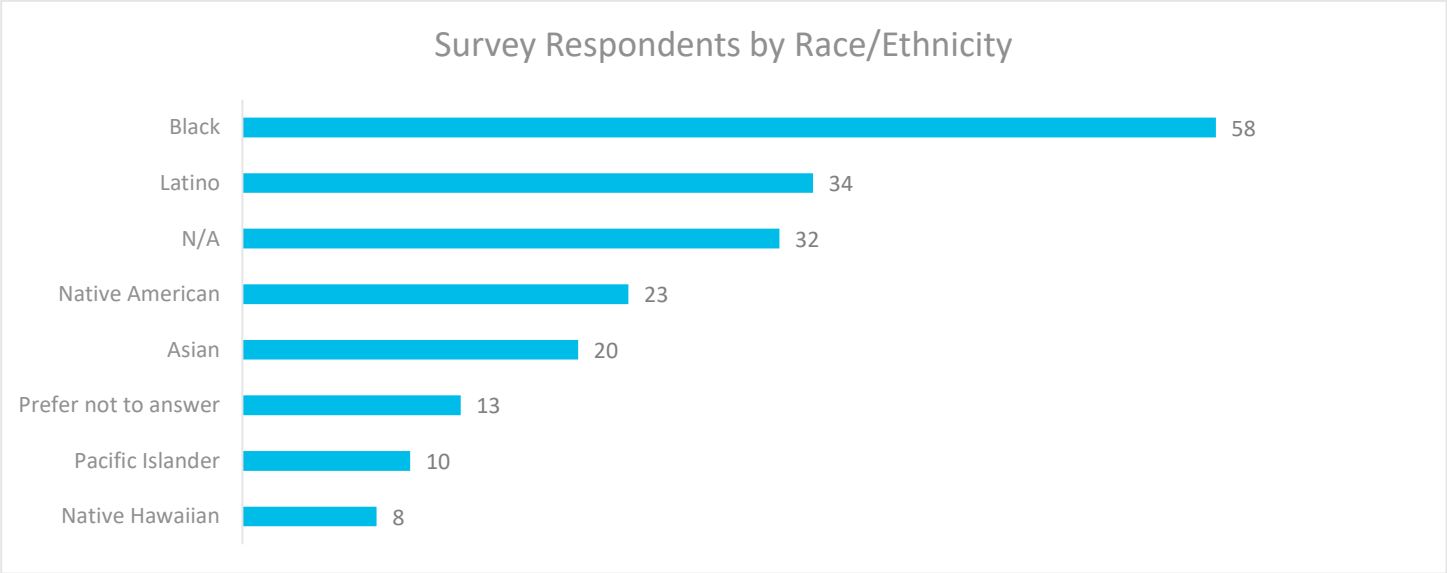
The survey was disseminated to over 4,000 partners on the CRP listserv and other channels amplified by Commerce, partners, and stakeholders. **146 people took the survey, and we heard from every key audience group.** Participants were able to select multiple options to describe their relationship the CRP.

- Organization or business who received CRP funding - Economic Development Programs (Workforce Development): 41
- Other community organization: 35
- Organization or business who received CRP funding - Violence Prevention Programs: 32
- Applied for CRP funding but did not receive it: 18
- Organization or business who received CRP funding - Technical Assistance: 17
- Other small business: 14
- Organization or business who received CRP funding - Legal Assistance Programs: 10
- Other community member / member of the public: 10
- Workforce Development Partner: 9
- Local Advisory Team Member: 8
- Philanthropic organization: 7
- Statewide Advisory Committee Member: 3

- State Agency Partner: 3
- Tribal government: 3
- Organization or business who received CRP funding - Housing Programs: 2
- Community member who received CRP services: 2
- Other: 20

76% of survey respondents were from **one of the six** priority counties. There were no responses from Clallam, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Garfield, Island, Jefferson, Klickitat, Lincoln, Pacific, Pend Oreille, San Juan, Skamania, Wahkiakum or Walla Walla counties.

For CRP for the 2025-2027 fiscal biennium, the legislature defined "by and for community organizations" **to include, but are not limited to,** those operated by and for Black, Latino, Native American, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities. Survey respondents were asked if they were taking this survey as an individual community member or an organizational by-and-for in one of these communities.



Summary of findings from listening sessions and community conversations

1. What worked well in CRP 1.0

- **Flexible funding and local impact:** Grants enabled grassroots by-and-for organizations to innovate and respond to local needs quickly. Examples included youth programs, small business accelerators, culturally specific healing practices and direct assistance like eviction prevention.
- **Community-led processes:** Local Advisory Teams (LATs) surfaced smaller and first-time applicants, ensuring more diverse and equitable distribution. Partnerships between community orgs, workforce boards and philanthropy maximized impact.
- **Positive program outcomes:** Youth engagement, leadership development, college access, job pathways and stronger community healing spaces were highlighted repeatedly.

2. Challenges and areas to improve

- **Contracting and funding delays:** Delays between award and contract signing shortened program timelines, often forcing orgs to rush implementation. The reimbursement-only model strained small orgs without upfront capital.

- **Administrative and reporting burdens:** Heavy reporting requirements and unclear KPIs discouraged grassroots participation. Smaller orgs struggled with compliance, insurance and case management demands.
- **Communication gaps:** Lack of transparency about available funding, application processes or fellow grantees caused confusion and duplication of efforts.
- **Eligibility and access barriers:** Some city-limit rules or unclear 'by-and-for' definitions excluded qualified groups. Language access and accessibility were cited as barriers.
- **Funding cuts:** CRP 2.0 funding was significantly reduced compared to 1.0, raising concerns about sustainability and reaching grassroots orgs.

3. Community recommendations (Common themes)

- **Streamline and simplify processes:** Shorter, foundation-style applications with plain language. Quarterly (not monthly) reporting with right-sized key performance indicators (KPIs).
- **Improve funding models:** Offer advance payments or deliverables-based grants instead of reimbursement-only. Ensure earlier funding release, especially for school-year programs. Provide repeat/scale-up funding for successful initiatives.
- **Strengthen local decision-making:** Open, transparent LAT applications with diverse representation (rural, small orgs, youth, lived experience). LATs should choose their own facilitators and have authority in grant design. Clear processes for conflicts of interest if LAT members are also grantees.
- **Expand technical assistance (TA):** Support beyond applications—covering contract management, reporting and language access. Starter toolkits and consistent, ongoing TA across the grant cycle.
- **Transparency and communication:** Publish total funding pools, award decisions and philanthropic partnerships. Fund local communications from LATs (radio, flyers, social media) to reach communities.
- **Sustainability and systems support:** Invest in shared infrastructure (vehicles, space, admin staff). Develop paths to sustain successful pilot programs beyond CRP's initial investment. Address sector gaps like legal aid funding, small business resiliency and local food/farm processing.

4. Key decisions and shifts in CRP 2.0

- **Reduced funding:** CRP 1.0 had $200M (2 years), while CRP 2.0 has $50–100M spread over 2–4 years.
- **Program scope:** Narrowed to 4 core areas—Economic Development (largest share), Reentry, Legal Assistance, Violence Prevention.
- **Expanded priority communities:** Beyond Black, Latine, and tribal communities to include Asian, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian groups.
- **Strengthened local control:** LATs will design local grant criteria, review applications and recommend funding, with Commerce in a compliance-only role.
- **Simplified processes:** Exploring advance payment models, simplified contracts and reduced reporting burdens.

Common Themes Across All Sessions

- **Urgency to fix contracting and reimbursement delays:** Organizations want funds earlier to maximize program impact.
- **Simplification and transparency** from applications to reporting to communication about funding pools.
- **Empowerment of LATs:** Communities want local control, open access, and diverse representation.
- **Sustaining grassroots capacity** through ongoing TA, repeat funding and shared infrastructure support.
- **Equity and access:** Ensuring by-and-for orgs are truly prioritized, language/eligibility barriers are addressed and expanded communities are included.
- **Concern about funding cuts**: There is a strong worry about doing 'more with less' and ensuring dollars still reach those most impacted.

Summary of findings from public survey

Feedback on Program Implementation

Based on previous feedback, we propose MAINTAINING the following aspects of CRP that worked well. Do you agree?

Percent of participants who chose "strongly agree" "agree" or "neutral"

- **89.7% -** Providing technical assistance to by-and-for organizations to build capacity
- **89.6% -** Use a Local Advisory Team model for local grant recommendations
- **84% -** Strengthen partnerships with philanthropy like Community Foundations and United Ways
- **91.1% -** Partner with workforce, housing, health, philanthropy and justice systems for greater impact
- **89.5% -** Have Local Advisory Teams review grant applications and help make funding decisions
- **86.1% -** Collaborating with Local Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) on Workforce Development

What worked WELL that you would like to see maintained?

- Providing technical assistance
- Direct investment into local communities
- Flexible funding for reentry programs
- Community engagement forums
- Support from grant managers
- Financial coaching programs for BIPOC community members
- Investments into the Small Business Resiliency Network
- Timing and communication of updates and opportunities

Based on previous feedback, we propose making the following CHANGES to improve CRP for 2025-2027. Do you agree?

Percent of participants who chose "strongly agree" "agree" or "neutral"

- **89.4%** - Amplify impact of CRP within the 4 legislative focus areas by simplifying the number of different programs (vs running 17 different programs within the 4 focus areas like in CRP 2023-2025)
- **97.2%** - Enhance communication tools and timelines
- **94.4%** - Adopt an equitable funding formula and create a funding set aside specifically for tribes
- **92.3%** - Establish formal partnerships with the Governor's Racial and Ethnic Commissions

What did NOT work well?

- Inconsistent grants
- Barriers to direct access to funding
- Need for clearer and consistent contract guidelines
- Equitable distribution of funding
- Challenges with application processes
- Insufficient communication from the Department of Commerce
- Delays in payment processing
- Lack of culturally relevant support or technical assistance

With significantly lower funding, we will need to make some changes to CRP. What should we consider?

- Decreasing the average award amount
- Continuing to assist newly established grantees
- Ensuring equitable distribution of funds
- Prioritizing funding for organizations that did not receive previous funding
- Advocating for more funding
- Supporting very small organizations
- Creating an equity tool for funding allocation
- Decreasing the number of awards
- Balancing broader impact with sustainable impact
- Addressing the needs of marginalized communities with smaller populations

What should collaboration with by-and-for organizations look like?

- Input on priorities and process documentation
- Collaboration with individuals with lived experiences
- Intentional, equitable, and sustained engagement
- Transparent and accessible communication
- Adequate compensation for time and expertise
- Co-leadership roles in decision-making bodies
- Regular communication with all partners
- Small collaborative spaces and in-person meetings
- Participatory grantmaking and co-design of funding priorities
- Clear definition and involvement of "By and For" organizations
- Creating a collaborative process involving relationship building and shared understanding

Local Advisory Teams

The Community Reinvestment Project is **PROPOSING** the formation of **Local Advisory Teams (LATs) in all 12 regions across Washington State.** That means putting decision-making power into the hands of local leaders, by-and-for organizations and trusted voices from impacted communities. These equity-centered governance bodies will ensure CRP resources are deployed with transparency, accountability and cultural responsiveness, especially across program areas like Violence Prevention, Economic Development, Legal Assistance and Reentry.

Role of Local Advisory Teams (LATs) - Each LAT will be composed of community-rooted individuals—particularly from by-and-for organizations—who will serve as co-governors of CRP implementation. LATs are not symbolic advisory boards. They are empowered to:

- Develop localized equity improvement plans with System Partners (i.e. Protocol for Culturally Responsive Organizations)
- Recommend funding to local partners based on community priorities
- Monitor program progress and elevate emerging needs from the ground up
- Work through challenges the community faces to accessing CRP funding opportunities, resources, and services (e.g. related to contracting)

To support this structure, Commerce will lead a **statewide recruitment and application process**—in partnership with **Washington state's Racial/Ethnic Commissions and others**—to identify LAT members in each region. Each region will receive targeted support to recruit, train, and sustain their LAT.

Please tell us how you feel about Local Advisory Teams.

Percent of participants who chose "strongly agree" "agree" or "neutral"

- **77.4% -** I have a clear understanding of what a Local Advisory Team (LAT) is
- **96.5% -** I believe it's important for local community members—especially from by-and-for organizations—to help make funding decisions
- **88.5% -** I think previous CRP programs reflected the needs of your community
- **87.1% -** I am confident that a Local Advisory Team made up of trusted local leaders would make funding decisions that reflect

What should we look for in Local Advisory Team MEMBERS?

- Unbiased, objective and systemic thinkers with collaborative experience
- Diversity in leadership, including women and youth participation
- Individuals deeply embedded and trusted by impacted communities
- Lived experience with relevant issues
- Representation from by-and-for organizations and grassroots nonprofits
- Commitment to racial equity, economic justice and community healing
- Multilingual individuals or those with direct relationships with diverse populations
- Long-term residents with community service experience
- Collaborative, solution-oriented, and willing to engage consistently
- Individuals vested in the community and compassionate about its needs

What should we look for in Local Advisory Team FACILITATORS?

- Diversity and inclusion
- Experienced facilitators with strong community relationships
- Local workforce development boards
- Organizations with an established community presence
- Dual facilitators to reflect meeting purposes
- Facilitators skilled in pulling information from all members
- Trusted individuals or organizations within the local community
- Community foundations or community facilitators
- Members from by-and-for organizations and diverse community representatives
- Elected officials or public service professionals
- Individuals with executive leadership experience in community-based organizations
- Passionate team leaders with good organizational skills

What would success look like to you if this model is implemented in your region?

1. Community-Led Development: Success is defined by community-led development where funding decisions and program strategies reflect the priorities and lived experiences of diverse communities, including Black, Latine, Indigenous, immigrant, refugee and justice-involved groups. This includes increased trust and transparency between community and system partners, and a feedback loop where community input is regularly gathered and acted upon.

2. Equitable and Transparent Funding: A successful model ensures equitable and transparent funding processes that increase access for grassroots, by-and-for organizations. This includes simplified application processes, flexible contracts and quick disbursements. Funding decisions should be made transparently, with clear communication and accountability to the community.

3. Empowered Local Advisory Teams (LATs): Local Advisory Teams (LATs) are empowered to direct funding decisions that reflect community priorities. LATs should be diverse, representative of the communities they serve, and operate with transparency and cultural responsiveness. They should foster collaboration across sectors and ensure resources reach those facing the greatest barriers.

4. Support for Smaller and Grassroots Organizations: The model supports smaller and grassroots organizations, especially those historically underfunded. This includes providing technical assistance, training and resources to build capacity and ensure these organizations can sustain and grow their impact. Equitable funding outcomes should allow these organizations to expand their work without unnecessary administrative burdens.

5. Measurable Community Impact: Success is measured by tangible improvements in community outcomes, such as increased housing stability, improved health outcomes and greater financial equity. The model should result in stronger local leadership, improved collaboration and measurable progress toward program goals. Ultimately, success means that the community feels the positive impact of the funding and sees real, lasting change.

What thoughts, concerns or additional feedback do you have about this structure of Local Advisory Teams?

1. Representation and Inclusivity: Concerns about ensuring diverse representation in Local Advisory Teams (LATs) to reflect the community's voices. Emphasis on including various races, cultures, orientations and life stages to avoid underrepresentation and ensure balanced recommendations.

2. Decision-Making Authority: Key issues include the need for LATs to have real decision-making power rather than just advisory roles. Clear guidelines on roles, responsibilities and conflict-of-interest policies are essential to maintain trust and avoid symbolic participation.

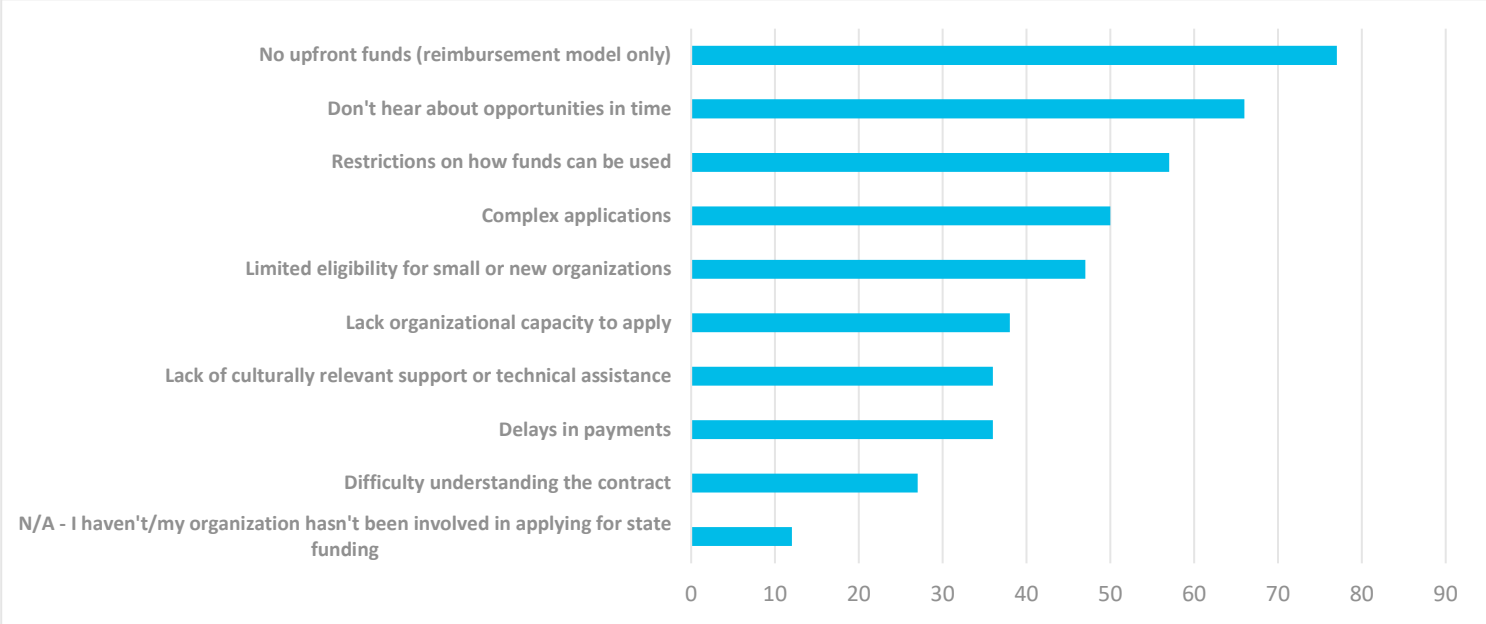
3. Funding Allocation: Concerns about the equitable distribution of funds, avoiding favoritism, and ensuring that resources reach the most impacted communities. Suggestions include leveraging existing community networks and ensuring transparency in funding opportunities.

4. Transparency and Communication: The need for clear, structured and transparent communication within LATs and between LATs and the broader community. This includes sharing information, updates and decisions to build trust and engagement.

5. Support and Capacity Building: Emphasis on providing adequate support, training and compensation for LAT members to participate fully. This includes resources for training, facilitation and administrative support to avoid overburdening community leaders.

Contracting Experience

In your experience, what barriers have you or your organization faced when trying to access funding through Commerce?



Please share any additional barriers you have experienced that aren't listed above or any other feedback related to contracting.

- Need for ongoing support and long-term funding
- Challenges with viewing Adult Family Homes (AFHs) as private homes rather than regulated providers
- Simplified contracting pathways for small or emerging organizations
- Difficulties with scanning signed documents and understanding application questions
- High administrative effort and compliance verifications
- Appreciation for flexibility and responsiveness in reentry grants
- Lack of funding for innovative or transformative initiatives
- Hardship of reimbursement grants and limited bandwidth
- Challenges with the OWMBE certification process
- Need for transparent communication about contracting opportunities
- Rigid contracting terms and reporting requirements
- Limited technical assistance for unfamiliar organizations
- Importance of early payments to help small businesses
- Suggestions for Commerce contracting staff to meet with grantees in person
- Concerns about the cultural responsiveness of the contracting process

What types of flexible funding options would make a difference in your ability (or your organization's ability) to participate in these programs?

The accumulative rank order for all participants, with 1 being the highest priority.

1. General operating support
2. Early payment at the beginning of the contract for initial work/planning
3. Fewer restrictions on allowable costs
4. Community-defined outcomes and deliverables
5. Quick access to emergency microgrants
6. State funding matched with private foundation funding

Additional Feedback

What else have we not asked about CRP that you'd like to provide feedback about?

- **Funding Allocation and Management:** Concerns about the allocation of CRP funding, including the need for equitable distribution, transparency in the grant process, and ensuring funds reach smaller, grassroots organizations. Emphasis on the importance of multi-year awards and avoiding mismanagement.

- **Capacity Building and Support:** Feedback highlights the necessity for ongoing capacity-building investments, technical assistance, and support for grassroots organizations. Suggestions include providing resources for grant management, data collection, and leadership development.

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Calls for ensuring equity in funding decisions, particularly for underserved and marginalized communities. Emphasis on addressing systemic barriers, such as racism and lack of representation in funding awards.

- **Program Management and Accountability:** Recommendations to continue improving program management, improved communication, transparency, and responsiveness.

- **Community Engagement and Impact:** Suggestions for involving community members in evaluating the use of funds, ensuring ongoing communication, and addressing barriers to participation. Emphasis on the importance of community-driven change and sustainable outcomes.